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**Australian Catholic Religious
Against Trafficking in Humans**

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Students respond to Pope Francis' call

Australian and New Zealand Catholic secondary school students are responding to a call from Pope Francis to be the changemakers in the struggle against human trafficking, a \$150 billion global industry.

Catholic school students from St Mary of the Angels Secondary College in Nathalia in country Victoria, Killester College in Springvale Melbourne, Clonard College Geelong, Red Bend College in Forbes, NSW and St Mary's College, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, have contributed to a [video](#) they hope will influence other young people to act and help eradicate forced labour from the production of chocolate, clothing and technology.

The 12-minute [video](#), made by ACRATH and Talitha Kum in partnership with the students and shown as part of the recent 2023 International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, **is now available as a free resource for all schools.**

The students urge young people and consumers of all ages to use their buying power to make a change, a very relevant message in the week leading up to Ash Wednesday, the start of the Easter season – a time when Australians are expected to spend about \$1.5 billion on chocolate and food*.

Sr Colleen Jackson rsc, ACRATH member and Talitha Kum Coordinator for Oceania, helped produce the [video](#) and said the call to action by young people around the globe is inspiring. She said Pope Francis has asked young people to focus their actions this year on human trafficking. At a meeting with young people the Pope acknowledged that this year's event inaugurates a special year of involvement of young people, calling on them "to be a blessing for other young people" and encouraged them "to care for dignity, yours and of every person you meet".

"Human trafficking disfigures dignity. Exploitation and subjugation limit freedom and turn people into objects to use and discard. And the system of trafficking profits from the injustice and wickedness that oblige millions of people to live in conditions of vulnerability," Pope Francis said.

Young people from the five schools have certainly heeded the Pope's call, each using their voice to urge others to fight for justice.

Students from St Mary's of the Angels in Nathalia talk about the survey they did which found that most of their peers would be prepared to pay more to ensure a living wage is paid to workers in the fashion industry. They have campaigned within



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the school community urging everyone to use an app to find out the ethical fashion rating of their clothes and then to write to their favourite brands if they have a poor rating.



Students from St Mary of the Angels Catholic Secondary College, Nathalia.

Killester College's Year 9 students in Springvale, Victoria, used the [video](#) to shine a spotlight on mobile phones and the companies that produce them using cobalt. There is growing evidence that children, in countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are involved in the extraction of the cobalt, with no opportunity for education or to live like other children. There are also major safety issues for the children.

Students at Red Bend College in Forbes, NSW, use Easter to raise awareness of slavery-free chocolate and how purchasing certified chocolate and help 'stop the injustice'.

Sr Colleen said the [video](#) reminds everyone that human trafficking and forced labour is closely connected to consumer practices; especially in developed countries like Australia.

"We know that slavery and human trafficking is consumer driven, so we all need to change to make a difference. People are enslaved because people like you and I want goods cheaply. We want services cheaply and we'll do anything we can to get things as cheaply as we can. For that to happen someone has to be exploited," Colleen said.



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The video is available free to schools. The video and a selection of other resources can be found at [here](#).
[See](#) young people flash mob.

*Research released in March 2022 by the Australian Retailers Association (ARA) in conjunction with Roy Morgan found that 73% of Australians said they planned on buying Easter food like hot cross buns, chocolates and Easter eggs, spending an average of \$100 on these items with nearly \$1.5 billion to be spent in total.

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